Tom Vincent is not Catholic. He is not from Thailand. He is a skilled turnaround man, taking management control of failing business corporations to make them, and himself, profitable.

There is no obvious reason for him to be a key benefactor to the Father Ray Foundation, a portfolio of Catholic-managed children’s homes in Pattaya, Thailand. But he is.

A member of the board of directors and an advisor to the organization, Vincent first visited Pattaya in 1989 when he heard about the orphanage, vocational school, and school for the blind Father Raymond Brennan had established. Vincent was in Thailand on business and dropped in to introduce himself to Brennan, who gave him a tour.

“Kids began running up to us and hollering his name, Paw Ray (‘Father Ray’ in Thai),” Vincent said. “I thought to myself right then and there, ‘This is not a movie set. They had no idea I was coming. It was not pre-announced.’ You know, ‘This is real stuff.’”

“I thought, ‘These kids really need help here,’” said Vincent, who now lives in Thailand and Hawaii. “Because, my goodness, some of their histories would just give you chicken skin all over.”

That year, Vincent established the Thomas J. Vincent Foundation to provide youth rehabilitation and education. The foundation has since founded, among other projects, the Thomas J. Vincent (1968) Fellowship Fund to help minority students pursue graduate education at MIT Sloan. Vincent started the fund in 1993 with a $100,000 down payment. Fellowship grants are made annually, “no strings,” to usually two students.

In 1991, Vincent established The Vincent Trust in Pattaya to send children from the Father Ray Foundation children’s homes to area colleges, universities, and Catholic high schools.

“The fund has grown,” Vincent said. “Many, many friends have contributed to it. Today we have a sizeable amount in there, in dollar amounts about $600,000.”

Last year, Vincent wrote and directed a 30-minute film detailing the foundation’s work. He also partnered with the Rotary Club of Ala Moana in Hawaii to buy a van to shuttle students from the Father Ray Children’s Home to school.

Vincent was raised in Baltimore, where he attended Johns Hopkins University but dropped out for lack of cash. He went to work as a teletype operator and, in 1961, moved to work at Fairchild Aircraft. In 1975, he began turning around corporate divisions and groups at what is today oilfield company Baker Hughes. Later, with two colleagues, he bought into and turned around York Air Conditioning, more than quadrupling the stock price in less than two years. He retired in 1988.

Vincent attended MIT Sloan from 1967–1968. He said the relationships he formed at the School are lasting ones and that many of his classmates have contributed to the Thomas J. Vincent (1968) Fellowship Fund.

Learn more about the Father Ray Foundation at www.fr-ray.org or email vincentfoundation@yahoo.com.

To learn more about the Thomas J. Vincent (1968) Fellowship Fund at MIT Sloan, please contact the MIT Sloan Office of External Relations located at 30 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA 02142-1347, at 617-253-1557 or mitsloangiving@mit.edu.